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**Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley
Senate Budget Committee Hearing
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Mr. Chairman, I was reviewing the transcript of the press conference you held last week with Congressman Spratt in which you criticized the President and the Republicans for supporting a budget that “raids” Social Security and Medicare.

During that press conference you stated, “If our budget plan had been adopted, we would be in far better shape ...” In fact, you went so far as to say, “...we had a budget that would have avoided these problems.”

I decided to take another look at the Democratic Alternative Budget, and you won’t believe what I discovered. Mr. Chairman, your budget would have “raided” the Social Security and Medicare trust funds by \$237 billion. I point out this fact – not to criticize your budget – but to remind the Chairman that the current economic slowdown would have affected his budget as well.

I know how tempting it is to use colorful language when engaged in political debate. But, I would suggest the current debate over who is “raiding” the trust funds is misleading and counterproductive.

It’s misleading because the public thinks we’re talking about “stealing” money from Social Security and Medicare, when in fact we are talking about how much of that money should be used for debt reduction.

It’s counterproductive because debt reduction won’t save Social Security and Medicare. It won’t even come close.

As CBO Director Crippen stated before this Committee on Tuesday, “One has to think about policies that grow the economy. And not just in the confines of a given amount of money that might be attributed to a trust fund, because ... ultimately the trust fund is the economy and the size of the economy. And it’s the totality of the federal budget that may affect that, not just the dollars that are involved in a trust fund.”

I believe it’s time to stop the finger pointing and the acrimony. We need to sit down and work together on a bipartisan solution to the long-term fiscal problems facing our country. I hope we are able to do that sooner, rather than later.